

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Geography Division, ORR

Project Initiation Memorandum

Date: 12 November 1964

Project No.: 60.2243

- 25X1A 1. Subject of Proposed Project: Selection of Critical Primitive Areas.
- 25X1A 2. Statement of Problem: To select and identify the most critical primitive areas in the underdeveloped world, with a brief statement of reasons for selection of each. Selection, in accordance with criteria agreed upon by D/GG and [REDACTED] is in support of basic doctrine paper being developed by [REDACTED]
- 25X1A 3. Requester: [REDACTED] (See attached request).
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Assistant Director, ORR

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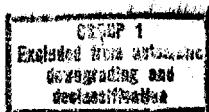
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25X1A Requester [REDACTED]  
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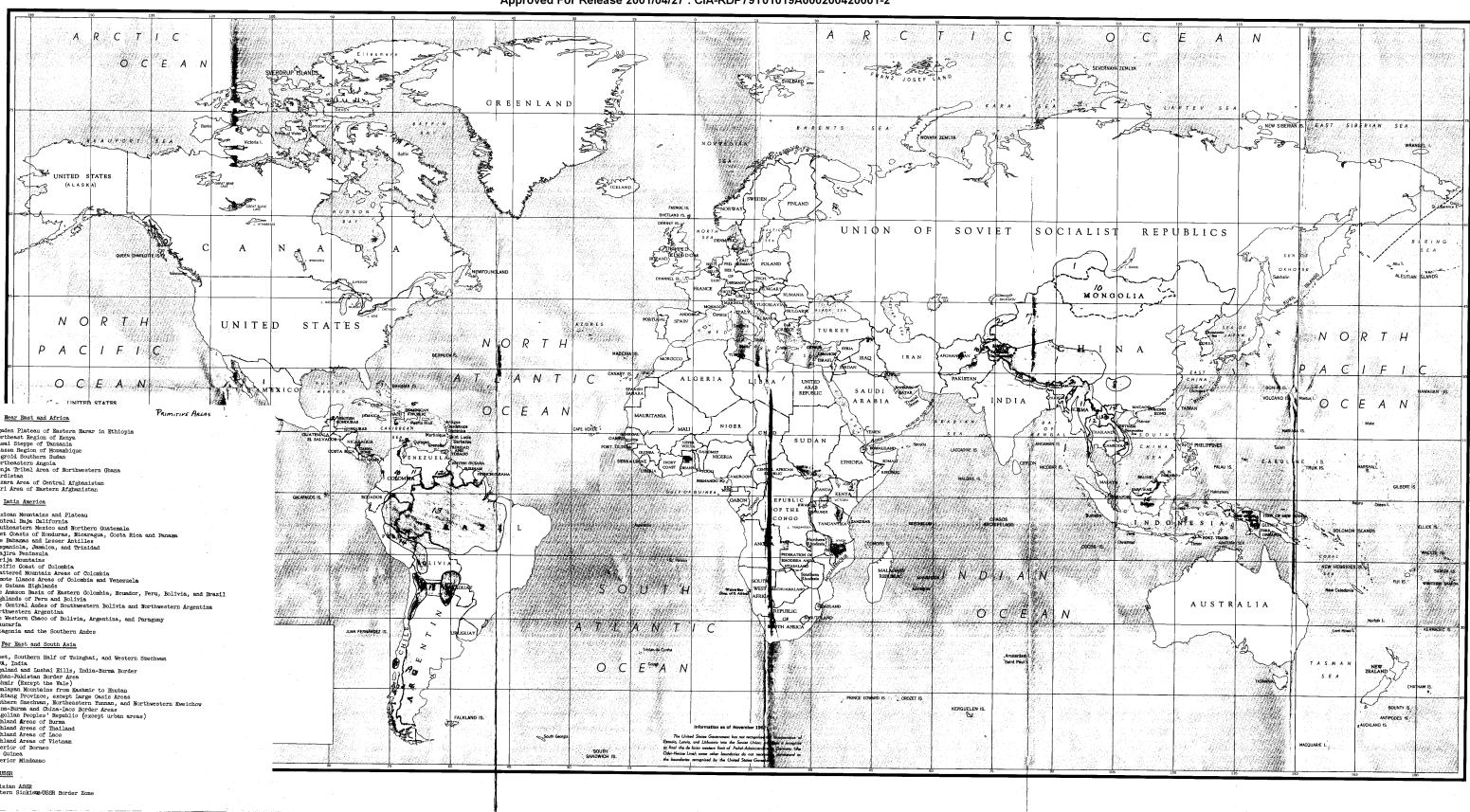
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Near East and Africa

1. Ogaden Plateau of Eastern Somaliland in Ethiopia.

The Ogaden Plateau is an arid, barren, rolling plain. A few widely scattered, seasonally passable desert tracks provide the only motorable link with outside areas. The Ogaden is occupied by nomadic Somali herdsmen, many of whom migrate seasonally between Ethiopia and Somalia. The Somalis are disenchanted with the government of Ethiopia and might well be used against other non-Somali peoples in East Africa.

2. Northeast Region of Kenya.

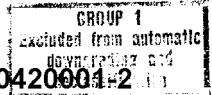
Northeastern Kenya is a broad plain covered with mixed grass and thornbrush. A sparse network of seasonal desert tracks link this isolated region with the remainder of Kenya. Most of the people in this sparsely populated area are nomadic Somalis who have long moved with relative ease between Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia. These Kenya Somalis have strong cultural and ethnic ties with other Somalis in East Africa and have been traditionally hostile to the government of Kenya.

3. Maasi Steppe of Tanzania.

The Maasi Steppe is a dry, flat, brush-covered area broken by isolated hills around its outer limits. The communications net consists of native footpaths and seasonally passable tracks through the interior. There are no railroads or all weather, hard surfaced roads traversing the area. The nomadic Maasi cattle people of this dry steppe land move with ease between Kenya and Tanzania. They are constantly at odds with settled people in both countries.

4. Rhodesia Region of Mozambique.

The broken terrain of Northern Mozambique is cut by numerous streams. Woodland and grassland predominate. Elevations of from 1500 to 3000 feet above sea level are the rule except in the southwest corner of the area bordering Lake Nyasa. Here the land rises above the general level of the surrounding territory to elevations of from 3000 to 4500 feet with some small areas rising to above 4000 feet. The principal road net of this area exists along Lake Nyasa and in the southern areas from east to west.



It is an all weather road system. Other roads consist of footpaths and seasonal tracks. The area is bounded by Lake Nyasa and the Ruvuma River which recently have been used as springboards for incursions into Mozambique proper. The indigenous population crosses easily into Tanzania and Malawi from this area.

5. Southern Sudan.

Most of southern Sudan is very flat but near the borders with Kenya and Uganda some elevations reach 10,000 feet above sea level. A system of all-weather roads is found in the western and southern parts of the area, but in other places, especially in the swampy east, only seasonal roads and tracks exist. The population of southern Sudan is culturally isolated from Khartoum but is related to the tribes of the Congo (Leopoldville) and the Central African Republic. There are few checks on movement from the southern Sudan into the Central African Republic, the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

6. Northeastern Angola.

This thinly populated area borders the Congo (Leopoldville) to the northeast, Zambia to the southeast and extends westward to the vicinity of the settlement of Villa Luso. The Benguela Railroad that serves the mining interests of the Katanga cuts from east to west across the middle of the area. North of the railroad, rough bush country drains northward into the Kasai River system in the Congo. The scant overland movement through this section follows the north-south drainage pattern and the people have close cultural ties in the Congo. South of the railroad, bush country, once again cut by many streams, drains to the southeast into Zambia. In neither case are the people of northeastern Angola identified with the colonial government.

7. Gonja Tribal Area of northwestern Ghana.

The Gonja District is a thinly populated, mixed forest and grass covered plain. One all-weather, natural surface road crosses the western edge of the area. This isolated area is settled by the Gonja and related tribal people. These "political units" have close cultural ties with the people of Upper Volta and the northern areas of the Ivory Coast and Togo.

8. Kurdistan.

The most isolated area of the region is situated near the intersection of the borders of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey and generally west of Lake Van and south of Lake Urmia. The mountainous terrain that is responsible for the primitive character of this area restricts vehicular movement to a few

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easily interdicted roads. The Iraqi army has not been able to control the area with strikes by tanks and aircraft against conventional targets. Horses and mules are the most reliable means of transport over narrow, rocky trails but winter rains and snow may halt all movement at times. The conflict in Iraq remains unresolved and the Kurds continue to move back and forth between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey with relative ease.

9. Hazara Area of Central Afghanistan.

The Hazaras occupy an area in the central mountains of Afghanistan west of Kabul. The area is dominated by Kuh-i-Bala range with elevations between 9,000 and 12,000 feet above sea level. This rugged, barren region is the source of the Hari Rud, Kabul, and Bolmand rivers and is particularly difficult to traverse during winter rains and snows. To the south is the Hazarajat, an area broken by ridges too steep to traverse. Pack trails and paths are few and far between throughout the Hazara tribal area. The Hazara tribesmen who move with the seasons down the river valleys of their area are independent and are hostile to any attempt by the central government to control the area.

10. Buri Area of Eastern Afghanistan.

Buristan, an area situated along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border between the Kabul River and the Kohistan Corridor, is characterized by narrow, steep sided valleys that separate spurs of the Hindu Kush mountains rising more than 15,000 feet above sea level. Movement is channelled through these valleys -- the only places within the area that can be considered inhabited. The government is suspicious of the Buri and security elements ring the area to the west but are not effective along a section of the border with Pakistan.

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## Latin America

Latin America has many primitive areas according to the criteria of remoteness, poor communications, and sparse population. However, it is not as easy to find such areas that contain population groups that are organized under internal leadership, are detached from the control of the central government, and at the same time are sufficiently sophisticated to perform effectively in the support or resistance to that government. Characteristically, the population groups of Latin America are imbued with concepts of authoritative control from the central government as a result of the long history of Spanish and Portuguese domination in nearly every quarter of Latin America, further bolstered by the Church. In addition, the cross-breeding of Spanish or Portuguese blood with that of the native populations has resulted in a noticeable percentage of mestizo blood that has usually added a degree of prestige and sometimes leadership. Consequently, few pure ethnic groups remain; only in the vast Amazon Basin and in relatively small areas of Central America or in Indian Reservations are there truly disassociated ethnic groups, and most of these live on such a primitive level that they have no knowledge or even potential interest in the outside world.

### 1. Mexican Mountains and Plateau.

A vast area of rugged mountain extends through northwestern Mexico. To the north and east of these mountains broad, semiarid plateaus are cut by occasional streams of low gradient and interior drainage. The population is sparse and consists primarily of farmers or miners living in small villages with little contact with the outside world.

### 2. Central Baja California.

The central part of the peninsula is arid and rugged and has few settlements. The small towns to the south and north are connected by one road, and there are no railroads. The population consists of mestizos with no local or unique characteristics.

### 3. Southeastern Mexico and Northern Guatemala.

Forest-covered mountains and hills in southern Mexico and northern Guatemala contain several primitive tribes that are either entirely cut off from civilization or have limited contact with the mestizos who live in small, scattered towns. There are only a few roads and no railroads.

### 4. East Coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.

The east coast zone of Central America consists of tropical forested lowlands inhabited by scattered, primitive groups living by subsistence

agriculture and fishing. They have little outside contact except in areas where they are employed on commercial plantations. The scattered Native villages are of long standing, and, lacking transportation facilities, have changed little if at all over the years.

### 5. The Bahamas and Lesser Antilles.

The Bahamas consist of over 700 islands only 20 of which are inhabited, all by British subjects under colonial jurisdiction. None other islands qualify as remote or isolated.

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All of the Bahamas are within 30 miles of Cuba.

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The Lesser Antilles consist of numerous islands, all with high population densities; most of them have small early areas, however, that are of marginal economic value.

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The population groups are all either British, French, or Dutch jurisdiction and consist of a white minority and a black majority that in many cases has some dominant group behavior pattern (i.e., voodoo).

### C. Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Trinidad.

The island of Hispaniola is one of the most densely populated areas in the Caribbean, but there are small sections are sparsely settled and qualify as remote. In the Dominican Republic the rugged southern slopes of the Cordillera Central have no roads and only occasional habitations in an area that covers the west-central third of the country. Another isolated area in the Dominican Republic is in the mountain slopes of the Sierra de Bahoruco and the adjoining coastal plains in the southwestern corner of the country, including also the La Isla Beata. The sparse population in these two areas consists of subsistence farmers with no unique characteristics.

In Haiti every section is densely populated except the rugged forested slopes of the Massif du Sud in the Southern Peninsula. The very sparse population in this remote area has no distinguishing characteristics.

The only isolated section of Jamaica is in the limestone plateau, in the rugged and sparsely populated "cockpit" country located roughly between Montego Bay and Mandeville. In Trinidad the mountains in the north contain a small section of rugged and forested country in which there are few habitations. For both of these islands, the population consists of a white minority and a negro majority, with no distinguishing characteristics. In Trinidad, there is also a moderately large East Indian group that figures prominently in the economy of the country.

7. **Guajira Peninsula.**

This sparsely-populated semiarid peninsula forms the northernmost boundary between Colombia and Venezuela. It is inhabited by Guajira Indians living under tribal organization but operating within a money economy. They are engaged primarily in nomadic herding, fishing, and mining, but also carry on contraband operations between Colombia, Venezuela and the Netherlands Antilles. The region experiences frequent, serious droughts, and economic assistance is needed to increase and conserve the local water supplies.

8. **Perija Mountains.**

This forested mountain range, the Serrania de Perija, is situated along the Colombia/Venezuela border west of Lake Maracaibo. It is inhabited by the Muisca Indians who remain openly hostile toward all outsiders.

9. **Pacific Coast of Colombia.**

The coastal lowlands and the western slopes of the Western Cordillera of Colombia receive heavy rainfall and are clothed in dense tropical forests. The region is sparsely populated by large groups and small numbers of tribal Indians. The population is situated primarily along the many stream valleys and is engaged in a primitive economy of fishing, hunting, collecting, and subsistence agriculture. A small percentage of the population is employed in placer gold mining and sawmilling operations. The ports of Barranquilla and Tumaco constitute the principal regional centers and the communication links with the rest of Colombia.

10. **Scattered Mountain Areas of Colombia.**

There are numerous remote areas in the rugged Central and Eastern Cordilleras of Colombia that are inhabited by only a sparse population of highland Indians and Mestizos. The Indians practice shifting cultivation and work on the coffee plantations of large landowners. The areas are not accessible by good roads and movement within the areas is primarily by pack animal or on foot. The "violence zones" of Colombia, such as Marquetalia and Riochiquito, are examples of such remote mountain areas.

11. **Plains Areas of Colombia and Venezuela.**

El Llano is an extensive plains area with a vegetative cover of grassland, chaparral and some tropical dry forest. The sparse population consists primarily of Mestizos and Indians engaged in herding, subsistence agriculture and hunting. There are some large commercial livestock ranches.

12. The Orinoco Highlands.

This sparsely-populated highland zone comprises the southern parts of Venezuela, British Guiana, Surinam and French Guiana. The vegetation ranges from rainforest to savanna. Tribal Indians and groups of black negroes lead a primitive existence of fishing, hunting, the collection of forest products, and subsistence agriculture. Small numbers of whites and mestizos are engaged in prospecting and cattle raising -- the latter primarily in the savannas of British Guiana.

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13. The Amazon Basin of Eastern Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil.

Essentially a vast area of tropical rainforest with scattered small areas of savanna (grazeland), primarily in Brazil. The region is inhabited by a sparse population of Indians and mestizos. The Indians range culturally from primitive tribes having no contact with civilization through all intermediate stages to individuals fully integrated into the economy and culture of the mestizo society. The principal economic activities are hunting, fishing, the collection of forest products, and subsistence agriculture, usually along the rivers. Livestock raising, mining and commercial agriculture are important locally. Significant minority groups include Japanese agricultural colonists along the lower Amazon River.

14. Highlands of Peru and Bolivia.

A few roads and railroads serve a very limited corridor through this high, windswept, semiarid region. Vast areas that are primitive and isolated contain small subsistence-level villages of Quechua and Aymara Indians who have only limited contact with the more sophisticated world. Since the Bolivian Revolution, the Indians there have become more enlightened than those in Peru.

15. The Central Andes of Southwestern Bolivia and Northwestern Argentina.

Except for a few isolated mining communities, this high, arid, remote area is practically uninhabited. The terrain is extremely rugged, and communication facilities are almost non-existent.

16. Northwestern Argentina.

This is a desolate, sparsely inhabited region on the Argentine-Bolivian border. Apart from the few roads and railroads joining the two countries, transportation facilities in the area are primitive. Thousands of Bolivian Indians migrate across the border seasonally to work in the Argentine sugar cane fields.

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17. The Western Chaco of Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay.

The area is part of a vast, poorly drained inland lying east of the Andes. It includes dense forests as well as large tracts of savanna and arid sections with brush and cactus. The entire area is sparsely settled, and except for the new Trans-Chaco Road, has only tracks and trails. Biting tribes of little-known Indians, numbering perhaps 50,000, inhabit the western section north of the Pilcomayo River and small Indian colonies are scattered in the western section of the area in Paraguay. Scattered small communities of quebracho gatherers are also located in the area, both in Paraguay and Argentina.

18. Araucaria.

Some 100,000 Araucanian Indians live on small reservations in south central Chile. They have been only partially assimilated into the general Chilean society. Because of poor living conditions and other factors, the Araucanians have long been a target for Communist propaganda and penetration. Their location near Concepcion -- the third most important industrial city of Chile and a center of Communist strength -- gives the group added significance.

19. Patagonia and the Northern Andes.

In this extensive and largely undeveloped region there are sizeable groups of indigenous people [redacted]

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- #### **L. Tibet, Southern Half of Gansu, and Western Szechuan.**

This is an area of rugged mountains, desolate high plateau, sparsely populated, with large uninhabited areas. The inhabitants have a history of dissidence, and in recent years have demonstrated the desire and ability to engage in dissident activities.

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- NETRA, India.**

This is an area of isolated, very rugged, mostly forested mountains. The population consists of a variety of primitive groups, some of which have a history of turbulence. Communist-fomented dissidence would weaken Indian control and facilitate Chinese designs on the area.

- ### **3. Magalur and Idukki Hills, India-Pepper Center.**

This area of rural, mountainous terrain is inhabited by various Hmong groups and related people. Some of the Hmong groups have conducted dissident activities against the Indian government over a number of years.

- #### 4. Afghan-Pakistan Durand Area.

This is an area of mountain and desert country inhabited by tribal peoples much given to feuds and general "hell-raising." The inhabitants are generally opposed to any centralized control.

- ### **2. Kadavu (Except the West).**

This region of very high mountains and plateaus contains large unpopulated areas. There also are several tribal groups of various cultural levels who, although generally peaceful, are located near Indian communication lines to Tibet and near the Kachin-Garo-Fire Line.

- #### **C. Kinnayon Mountains from Kathmandu to Bharatpur**

This is an area of high mountains, much of which is uninhabited. Most of the people are of Tibetan stock. Trade relations and family ties with Tibet make the population both susceptible to the blandishments of anti-Chinese Tibetans.

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- ## T. Ninghsia Province, except Lien-chou County.

This is predominantly mountain and desert country, with large uninhabited areas. The inhabitants - especially Marathas. [Marathas]

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and Hui -- have a history of disaffection. There is considerable ethnic affinity between the population of Sinkiang and the Muslim peoples of North Central Asia.

8. Southern Szechuan, Northeastern Yunnan, and Northwestern Guichin.

This mountainous area includes concentrations of Lahu (I), a tribal people with a history of intratability. There also are scattered groups of other hill tribes, including the Miao, who have ethnic affinity with the Hmong of Southeast Asia.

9. China-Burma and China-Laos Border Areas.

This is a mountainous area with a sparse population of hill tribes, including the La-hu, Ma-hsi, Ching-pa (Kachin), and Kwe. These tribes have retarded cultures, transborder affinities, and some history of disidence.

10. Mongolian People's Republic (except urban areas).

This vast area of hills and steppes is sparsely populated by predominantly nomadic Mongols. It is strategically located between China and the USSR. The inhabitants are ethnically related to the Mongols within Communist China and are strongly anti-Chinese.

11. Highland Areas of Burma.

These mountainous areas, generally heavily forested, are inhabited by non-Burman tribal peoples with a traditional antipathy for lowland Burmans and a history of resistance to the central government. They have transborder ethnic affinities with tribes in India, China, Laos, and Thailand.

12. Highland Areas of Thailand.

These mountainous areas, generally heavily forested, contain a sparse population of hill tribes. They have ethnic affinities with hill tribes in Burma, Laos, Vietnam, and China.

13. Highland Areas of Laos.

There are heavily forested mountain areas that are sparsely populated by hill tribes. The tribes have ethnic affinities with tribes in neighboring countries, including China and North Vietnam. The PA potential of the population has been demonstrated by NVA activities. The area includes a supply corridor between North Vietnam and Viet Cong forces.

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14. Highland Areas of Vietnam.

These are heavily forested mountain areas, sparsely populated by Hmong tribes. Again, the tribes have ethnic affinities with tribes in adjoining countries. Also, they have a history of poor relations with mainland Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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15. Interior of Borneo.

This is an area of low but rugged mountains, heavily forested, and with extensive swampland. It is sparsely populated, with large uninhabited areas, but strategically located with respect to the present Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation.

16. New Guinea.

New Guinea is dominated by high, rugged, forested mountains and vast stretches of swampland. It is sparsely populated, with large uninhabited areas, but a potential source of trouble because of the political division of the island between Indonesia and Australia.

17. Interior Mindanao.

This is an area of low but rugged mountain ranges with sparsely populated valleys. The inhabitants are ethnically similar to people of neighboring regions of Indonesia. The presence of illegal Indonesian immigrants constitutes a potential vehicle for supporting infiltration of Indonesian agents.

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There are vast areas within the eastern and northern portions of the USSR that are sparsely inhabited. Internal and external lines of communication are sparse, though not completely lacking, and ways of life among the indigenous non-Slavic peoples are still very primitive with respect to housing, forms of religious worship, etc. These areas are generally characterized by severe physical conditions, with respect to both climate and terrain. In general, the large extent of such areas can be perceived from the attached map of population density in which the areas with fewer than one (1) person per square kilometer correspond rather closely with areas where "primitive" conditions prevail.

These areas are not, however, beyond the range of government control. Even the smallest nomadic groups and fishing villages now have some periodic contact with the Soviet authorities. [REDACTED]

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Because of their location in the China-USSR boundary zone, the "primitive" areas may be regarded as significant in the context of the current antagonism between China and the USSR, during which even a minor source of conflict in the border zone could have serious repercussions. The areas or the people in them, as such, obviously do not represent any potential direct threat to the government in Moscow.

## I. Tuvian ASER.

With the exception of a small area centered on its capital, Kyzyl (population 40,000), the Tuvian ASER is a sparsely populated area of rugged mountain terrain. It lies just to the south of the major centers of industrial development in Siberia, stretching from the Kuznetsk basin in the west, through Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk and Bratsk in the east. It does not lie directly on the Sino-Soviet border, but rather is cushioned from China by the western end of outer Mongolia. During the 1960's, political union between the Tuva and Mongolia was thwarted by the USSR. Tuva retained an "independent" status until it was incorporated into the USSR in 1944.

## II. Western Sinkiang-USSR Border Zone.

This portion of the CPM-USSR boundary follows high, rugged mountain ridges. The area on the Soviet side is very sparsely populated by Kirgiz tribes. Border crossing incidents are not uncommon. Chinese maps in the past have included portions of the area within the CPM.

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Near East and Africa

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1. Ogaden Plateau of Eastern Harar in Ethiopia
  2. Northeast Region of Kenya
  3. Masai Steppe of Tanzania
  4. Niassa Region of Mozambique
  5. Negroid Southern Sudan
  6. Northeastern Angola
  7. Gonja Tribal Area of Northwestern Ghana
  8. Kurdistan
  9. Hazara Area of Central Afghanistan
  10. Nuri Area of Eastern Afghanistan

Latin America

1. Mexican Mountains and Plateau
2. Central Baja California
3. Southeastern Mexico and Northern Guatemala
4. East Coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama
5. The Bahamas and Lesser Antilles
6. Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Trinidad
7. Guajira Peninsula
8. Perija Mountains
9. Pacific Coast of Colombia
10. Scattered Mountain Areas of Colombia
11. Remote Llanos Areas of Colombia and Venezuela
12. The Guiana Highlands
13. The Amazon Basin of Eastern Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil
14. Highlands of Peru and Bolivia
15. The Central Andes of Southwestern Bolivia and Northwestern Argentina
16. Northwestern Argentina
17. The Western Chaco of Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay
18. Araucaria
19. Patagonia and the Southern Andes

Far East and South Asia

1. Tibet, Southern Half of Tsinghai, and Western Szechwan
2. NEFA, India
3. Nagaland and Lushai Hills, India-Burma Border
4. Afghan-Pakistan Border Area
5. Kashmir (Except the Vale)
6. Himalayan Mountains from Kashmir to Bhutan
7. Sinkiang Province, except Large Oasis Areas
8. Southern Szechwan, Northeastern Yunnan, and Northwestern Kweichow
9. China-Burma and China-Laos Border Areas
10. Mongolian Peoples' Republic (except urban areas)
11. Highland Areas of Burma
12. Highland Areas of Thailand
13. Highland Areas of Laos
14. Highland Areas of Vietnam
15. Interior of Borneo
16. New Guinea
17. Interior Mindanao

USSR

1. Tuvinian ASSR
2. Western Sinkiang-USSR Border Zone

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